



Turkey for two hundred, with a side of new traditions



When choosing a turkey for Thanksgiving dinner, Martha Stewart recommends one to two pounds of turkey per person. When it comes to serving a Thanksgiving feast to a couple hundred resettled refugees, however, the key is to think bigger, and supplement the traditional all-American aspects—turkey, mashed potatoes and gravy, pumpkin pie—with culturally-appropriate and inclusive variation: *halal* turkey, chicken curry, vegetarian lasagna, and Moroccan bread.

That's exactly what Philadelphia's Nationalities Service Center (NSC) did on Saturday, November 12th, when they teamed up with a group of Wharton business students from the University

of Pennsylvania to host Thanksgiving dinner for 225 resettled refugees. For many attendees, it was their first introduction to this beloved American holiday—not to mention their first experience with cranberry sauce, stuffing, and sweet potatoes topped with marshmallows.



"We challenged the students to secure traditional Thanksgiving foods, but also provide *halal* options as well as vegetarian ones," said Juliane Ramic, Director of Resettlement Services at NSC. "This group did really well. We served *halal* turkey, prepared and donated by a local Moroccan restaurant. The mashed sweet potatoes were amazing. We had far too many chocolate cakes and not enough pies though!"



Wharton graduate students organized all the food donations and preparation; a team of undergraduates from UPenn's Management 101 class decorated the rooms, took care of all the set up and clean up, and organized games and activities for the kids—complete with prizes they'd collected from local businesses.

"The highlight was clearly the dance party - there's something special about a round of the Macarena when dancers include a Bhutanese priest, an Iraqi man, a young Sudanese boy, several Wharton students and no shortage of resettlement case managers!" added Resettlement Program Manager Beverly Mallard.

With a balloon room and cupcake decorating room for the kids, and a cake walk for the crowd, there were lots of opportunities to mix and mingle, catch up with fellow community members, and share stories of personal traditions old and new.

"This is the 6th year we've hosted the Thanksgiving feast" explained Ramic. "Our refugee communities love it—it's a much-loved tradition that everyone looks forward to, and one we're proud to offer. I even had one former client ask if he could join in via video chat this year: he's a freshman away at college and hadn't missed an NSC Thanksgiving since he and his family were resettled to Philly in 2007."

When a college freshman begs for virtual turkey, you know you're doing something right.

Well done, NSC, and Happy Thanksgiving to all!

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ORR/

Photos courtesy Nationalities Service Center.

